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ABSTRACT

The paper explores the relationship between specific organizational variables of four public elementary schools and the integration of emotionally disturbed and neurologically impaired students into regular classes. It is explained that in a review of the literature concerning organizational variables and change, nine variables were selected for study: goal setting, adaptation, communication, leadership, decision making, human resource utilization, attitudes, morale, and cohesiveness. Using a naturalistic approach and a systems model, indicators of each variable are reported to have been obtained through observation, document search, and interviews. Results of comparison of data for integrated and non-integrated schools are examined, and variables which differentiated integrated from non-integrated schools at input (goal setting), thruput (communication, leadership, decision making, human resource utilization, and attitudes), and output (neither morale nor cohesiveness) are reviewed. Implications are discussed within the framework of the conceptual model. Among general conclusions drawn are that variables at the thruput level have the greatest relationship to integration as change and that variables which interface with the environment at the input and output levels have the weakest relationship. (CL)

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AN INVESTIGATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SPECIFIC ORGANIZATIONAL VARIABLES AND INTEGRATION OF EMOTIONALLY DISTURBED AND NEUROLOGICALLY IMPAIRED STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

As a result of Public Law 94-142 increasing attention is being paid to the mandate of providing special education and related services to exceptional children in the least restrictive environment. The study reported here aimed to explore the existence of and potential for impediments to the processes involved in this mandate. Focusing upon school practices, the purpose of the investigation was to determine the relationship between specific organizational variables and integration of emotionally disturbed and neurologically impaired students into regular classes. The findings indicated that some variables differentiated integrated schools from non-integrated school while other variables did not. The implications of the study are discussed relative to special and regular education, educational organizations, and change.

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SPECIFIC ORGANIZATIONAL VARIABLES AND INTEGRATION OF EMOTIONALLY DISTURBED AND NEUROLOGICALLY IMPAIRED STUDENTS

Rona Simek, Ph.D.

The concept of least restrictive environment, while alive in theory for some time, has been applied sporadically and with limited success during the last few years. Public Law 94-142 and concommitant state laws and regulations have focused attention toward the realization of a commitment to provide placement alternatives within the educational system for exceptional students. If such a commitment is to become a successful reality then existent and potential obstacles to full implementation must be determined and resolved.

The move from placement models of a more restrictive nature, such as self-contained classrooms, to models which ensure a place in the mainstream for exceptional students necessitates an understanding of the dynamics of change.* Essentially, the issue is two-fold revolving around fulfillment of the legal mandate while determining impediments to the change process which such fulfillment entails.

*In an effort to avoid the pitfalls of semantic argument, the terms change and innovation were used interchangeably for the purposes of this study.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

While the intent of the least restrictive environment mandate is acclaimed as a milestone in special education, attainment of its goal will not be simple or easy. For many exceptional children incremental return to the mainstream, integration, is preferred over total immersion (cf. Rubin, Simson, and Betwee, 1966). Initially integrating students may, in the long run, reap greater benefits than attempts at wholesale re-entry. This article focuses upon integration of emotionally disturbed and neurologically impaired students and impediments which may obstruct the process.

A review of the literature reveals that integration studies have been conducted in reference to: educable mentally retarded students (Bacher, 1965; Baldwin, 1958; Bradford, Brown, Kaplan, Rickert, and Stannard, 1973; Creswell, 1973, Korn, 1974; and Porter and Milazzo, 1958); physically handicapped students (Dibner and Dibner, 1973 and Ingram, 1965); learning disabled students (Hayball and Dilling, 1969 and Ley and Metteer, 1974); hearing impaired students (Meyerson, 1963); and blind students (Cutsforth, 1962). Only three studies which investigated integration of emotionally disturbed children were identified. In support of the integration model Rubin, Simson, and Betwee (1966) utilized an experimental and control group of children to research the effects of returning pupils, on an integrated basis, to the regular class. The results indicated that part-time placement, integration, in regular classes in the school being attended was definitely recommended prior to full transfer back to a

regular class full-time in the child's school of origin or home school. In a massive research effort of special classes, Morse, Cutler, and Fink (1964) found: it was far easier to get a child into a special program than it was to get him out again (cf. Dapper, 1974); the major instigators for integrating the child, in descending order of occurrence were the teacher, principal, psychologist, outside clinician, and screening committee; and, although 29 percent of the special class teachers surveyed indicated they had tried integrating their pupils into regular classes, somewhat over half of these teachers reported success with it. Finally. Grosenick (1970) investigated integration of emotionally disturbed students and, among her findings, noted that preparation of all school personnel for the entrance of the child was a critical factor in the success or failure of the child's integration. Such preparation included sharing information with the regular classroom teacher regarding the child's academic and behavioral strengths and limitations and seeking administrative support for the acceptance of the child in school.

While all three studies of integration of emotionally disturbed students have implications for regular education, further research in this area has been scarce and limited in scope. Moreover, research aimed at uncovering impediments to full implementation of least restrictive environment alternatives has been narrowly focused. Such studies and dialogues have centered around teachers' attitudes toward integration (Brooks & Bransford, 1971; Greene and Retish, 1973; Jones, 1974; Novotny, 1974; Shotel, Iano, and McGettigan, 1972: and Valletutti, 1969) and the retraining of regular classroom teachers to

work with handicapped pupils in the regular grades on a full-time basis (Adamson and Everett, 1972; Arneklov, 1972; Bertness, 1971; Blatt, 1971, Davis and Wyatt, 1971; Diggs, 1972; Edelman, 1966; Farrer & Guest, 1970; Glass & Meckler, 1972; Guskin, 1973; Mopsik & Hession, 1974; Reynolds, 1973; Taylor & Soloway, 1973; and Trippe, 1971). No research endeavor has been undertaken to study in depth designs of organizational variables, within educational settings, which are conducive to or impede integration. Such a study was conducted by the author and is described below.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the study was to determine the relationship between specific organizational variables and integration of emotionally disturbed and neurologically impaired (ED/NI) students into regular classes. The investigation sought to explore the reasons why some educational organizations have adopted the integration practice to a much greater degree than others. The study examined specific organizational variables of selected public schools in order to consider the role that these variables play in determining the extent and success of integration in schools which house special self-contained classes for emotionally disturbed and neurologically impaired students. Based on a review of the literature concerning organizational variables and change nine organizational variables were selected for study with the following definitions utilized:

Goal Setting: The specification of task objectives and the determination of criteria to measure accomplishment of the objectives. (Adapted from French & Bell, 1973.)

Adaptation: The ability to bring about change as a result of realistic, effective contact with the environment. (Adapted from Miles, 1965.)

Communication: The exchange of information and the transmission of meaning characterized by content, direction of information flow, and openness (distortion level). (Adapted from Katz & Kahn, 1966; Leavitt, 1964; Likert, 1967, and Miles, 1965.)

Leadership: The distribution and differential acts of influence, control, and reward. (Adapted from Katz & Kahn, 1966; Likert, 1967; & Miles, 1965.)

Decision Making: The process of sensing the existence of problems, inventing possible solutions, choosing a solution(s), implementing the solution(s), and evaluating the effectiveness of the solution(s). (Adapted from Miles, 1965.)

Human Resource Utilization: The effective use of people, in the accomplishment of objectives, characterized by individuals' feelings of a sense of learning, growing, and developing as persons in the process of making their contributions. (Adapted from Miles, 1965.)

Attitudes: A predisposition to think, feel, perceive, and behave toward an objective reference. (Adapted from Edwards, 1957; Kerlinger, 1964; and Shaw & Wright, 1967.)

Morale: A set of individual sentiments centering around feelings of well-being, satisfaction, and pleasure. (Adapted from Miles, 1965.)

Cohesiveness: A set of individual feelings of belongingness to a group, attraction to membership in the group, and a desire to stay with the group, be influenced by it and exert one's own influence in it; and a set of individual feelings of satisfaction regarding the manner in which conflict among group members is managed and resolved. (Adapted from French & Bell, 1973 and Miles, 1965.)

For each organizational variable measureable indicators of the presence or absence of variable elements were delineated. For example, in regard to Goal Setting, it was hypothesized that written goal statements concerning integration of ED/NI students would be present in highly integrated schools and absent in those schools in which no integration took place. The presence or absence of indicators for all organizational variables was determined through the application of the methodology discussed in the next section.

Integration was defined as a process whereby a child can be programmed anywhere along the time continuum, from five minutes, to a half day, to a full day, on a daily scheduled basis, in any one of the regular programs offered by the school, according to his need and what is best for him, with the ultimate purpose of returning the

pupil to the appropriate regular grade, on a full-time basis as soon as possible. (Adapted from Bertness, 1971, p.89 and Grosenick, 1972, p.314.) Integrated schools were those in which three or more emotionally disturbed and neurologically impaired students (per special class of ten pupils) were integrated, on a daily scheduled basis, into at least one regular class for academic subject area instruction. Non-integrated schools were those in which all of the emotionally disturbed and neurologically impaired students remained in their segregated special class settings for the entire day, each day of the week, for instructional purposes. A systems analysis model (Milstein & Belasco, 1973) provided the conceptual framework for the study. The systems perspective indicates that the variables are interdependent, interrelated, and in interaction. For diagramming purposes the nine organizational variables were placed in those sectors of the model, input, thruput, or output, where the investigator believed they were best represented. Additionally, at the output level, integrated students may be seen as the product. The conceptual framework for the purposes of this investigation is presented in Figure 1.

METHOD

Setting

The study was conducted in a large city public school system in New York State. Four K-8 public schools which housed special classes for ED/NI pupils were selected for study based upon their extant integration practices. A deliberate dichotomy of settings was chosen with two of the schools, A and B, integrating ED/NI students with a high frequency rate while the other two schools, C and D, did not integrate students.

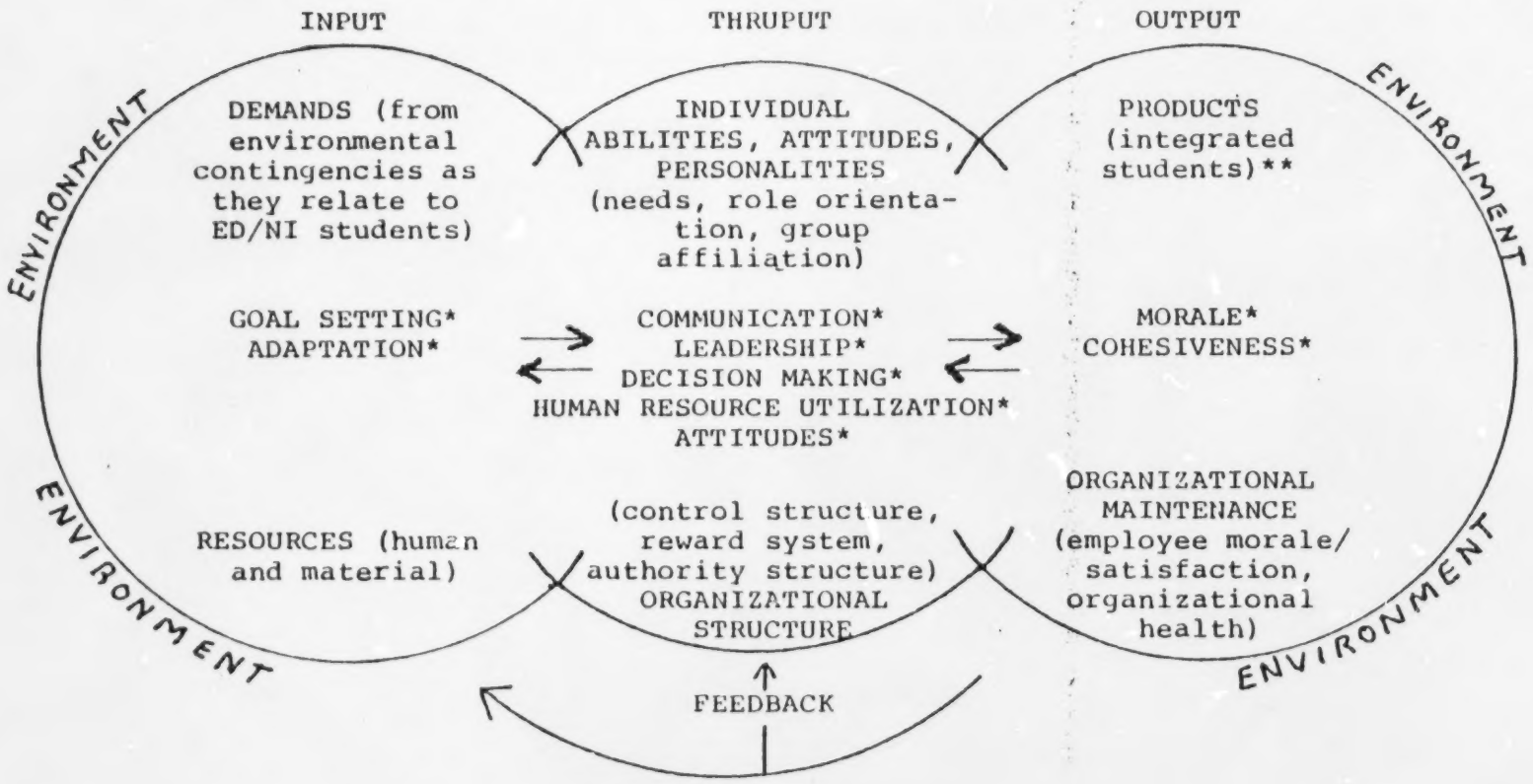

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework Based on the Milstein-Belasco Model

*Independent variables
**Dependent variable

Procedure

The methodology which was employed for data gathering relevant to the nine organizational variables selected to be studied was that of naturalistic research or the field study approach. Indicators of the variables were obtained through observation predominantly, document search, and interviews. Upon entry into the schools, observation began and continued for the duration of the study, three and one half months. Information collected from observations was recorded for each variable. When observations overlapped more than one variable category the information was recorded in all applicable categories.

Documents were searched as a second step in the study in order to verify observations and provide additional information. This information was also recorded in the appropriate variable category or categories.

As a final step an interview instrument was developed and a random sampling of teachers was effected for administration of the instrument. In addition, the principal and assistant principal (where applicable) of each school were interviewed as were all of the teachers of the special classes for ED/NI students. Thus, at schools A and B, the integrated schools, a total of fifteen people per school were interviewed while at schools C and D, the non-integrated schools, a total of twelve people per school were interviewed.

Data collected for each of the nine organizational variables were analyzed in response to the research questions asked for the variable. The analysis was performed by comparing the data collected for integrated schools, A and B, and by comparing the data collected for non-integrated schools, C and D. This comparison indicated where integrated schools and non-integrated schools demonstrated consistent

data related to each variable, inconsistent data related to each variable, and data which could not be discerned for analysis due to indeterminate (unclear or insufficient) data collected. Consistent data were those data which were the same across integrated sites and those data which were the same across non-integrated sites. Inconsistent data were those data which were different across integrated sites and different across non-integrated sites. Indeterminate data were those data which were unclear or insufficient to quantity to allow the researcher to discern information for analysis purposes. All of the data were then summarized for integrated schools and for non-integrated schools. For each of the nine organizational variables a summary comparison of findings relative to the relationship between the variable and integration for integrated and non-integrated schools was then put in table format. Corresponding research questions for the variables were listed, responses by integrated and non-integrated schools were entered, and the determination of the relationship of the variable to integration (i.e., whether or not the variable differentiated between integrated and non-integrated schools) was indicated. An overall relationship of the variable to integration was determined based upon the relationship found in response to each research question. A final summary of combined findings in terms of overall relationship for each of the nine organizational variables is in Table 1.

RESULTS

The findings indicated that there was a relationship between certain specific organizational variables and integration. The

Table 1

The Relationship of Organizational Variables to the Integration of ED/NI Students Into Regular Classes

Organizational Variable	Overall Relationship of Specific Organizational Variable to Integration at Integrated and Non-integrated Schools
INPUT	
Goal Setting[a]	Differentiates integrated from non-integrated schools
Adaptation	Does not differentiate integrated from non-integrated schools
THRUPUT	
Communication	Differentiates integrated from non-integrated schools
Leadership	Differentiates integrated from non-integrated schools
Decision Making	Differentiates integrated from non-integrated schools
Human Resource Utilization	Differentiates integrated from non-integrated schools
Attitudes	Differentiates integrated from non-integrated schools
OUTPUT	
Morale	Does not differentiate integrated from non-integrated schools
Cohesiveness	Does not differentiate integrated from non-integrated schools

[a]Operative integration goals.

relationship was that certain variables differentiated integrated from non-integrated schools. Under input, goal setting differentiated integrated from non-integrated schools while adaptation did not. Under thruput, communication, leadership, decision making, human resource utilization, and attitudes all differentiated integrated from non-integrated schools. Under output, neither morale nor cohesiveness differentiated integrated from non-integrated schools.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The findings and implications are best discussed within the framework of the conceptual model and its components of input, thruput, and output.

Input

Goal Setting

None of the four schools had official (written) integration goal statements and the researcher was disposed to concentrate upon what Perrow (1961) has called operative goals, those goals which tell us what the organization is actually trying to do regardless of what any official goals, had they existed, would have said were the aims. Studies of organizational change repeatedly have shown that one of the greatest drawbacks to successful innovation has been the lack of clearly defined goals. Bredo & Bredo (1975), Gross, Giacquinta, and Bernstein (1970), Heathers (1964, 1967), Lauter (1968), McMillan (1975), and Reynolds (1975) all pointed out that non-specified or ambiguous goals led to the failure of each of the studies of change

they investigated. The current study did not find this necessarily true. While no official integration goals existed, integration did exist. There appeared to be what Bredo & Bredo (1975) have called "symbolic agreements" operating at the integrated schools, A and B, and one of these agreements appeared to be a reciprocal arrangement which was in force for integration whereby special class and regular class teachers could "exchange" students according to their individual needs, and, dependent upon these needs, for varying periods of time. This reciprocal arrangement appeared to play a significant role in the success of integration at schools A and B. Based on the findings relative to the research questions for goal setting, this study suggested than an innovation could survive without official goals and that integration may occur in evolutionary ways that are beneficial to participants as well as the organization.

Adaptation

The findings indicated that environmental contingencies did not play a role in the implementation of integration practices at any of the four schools studied. Bredo & Bredo (1975), Lauter (1968), and McMillan (1975) all reported that involvement of parents and/or of the population to be served would have greatly increased the possibilities for success of the innovations they investigated. While this researcher cannot deny that such involvement may have, indeed, increased the possibilities of integration at the non-integrated schools, C and D, and augmented the already existing program at A and B, environmental groups, including parents, were not found to be change agents or change oriented in the schools studied.

Brickell's (1964) statement that parents' and other citizens' groups as well as the Board of Education do not exert a direct influence on the adoption of new types of instructional programs was applicable in this study. Brickell (1964, p.502) suggests that parents and other citizens do not know enough about educational methodology to favor or oppose specific innovations. This researcher agrees but adds that the schools may be continuing to impede their gaining of such knowledge by creating an illusion of mystique about them. While ignoring environmental contingencies may be desirable or convenient for an organization, one actively seeking change, Baldridge (1975) has noted "must make itself vulnerable by opening channels of communication and influence to its environment" (p.173) if eventual sanction of the change is to be attained. Parental involvement in the process of developing individualized education programs (IEPs) may afford a unique opportunity to educate parents and heighten the role that they play in developing and implementing integration models.

Thruput

Communication

Relative to communication, the findings of this study were consistent with those of Lippitt (1967) who found that innovation was more common in schools with more open communication and support systems. An open door policy of the administration at both integrated schools seemed to lend itself to a willingness on the part of staff to participate in integration policies. The findings were also in agreement with Fox and Lippitt's (1964) study, however, which

found that in most school situations channels of communication whereby successful innovations can be shared are so poorly developed that little such sharing takes place. While opportunities for sharing information were observed as and reported to be more available at the integrated schools (including sharing with superiors), even teachers at these schools reported that more time to exchange information regarding integration was desirable. In this sense this study's findings agreed with those of Eichholz (1963) who observed that change could be encouraged by creating both informal and formal channels of communication and using these, as well as formal routing channels, to circulate information.

The implications of the findings for the communication variable suggest that open, distortion-free communication among those involved in the change, integration in this case, appears to be conducive to the implementation of change. Vertical as well as horizontal communication and sufficient opportunity to communicate should also be extant. Open dialogue among organizational members should be encouraged and granted by superiors and members should be urged to take advantage of these opportunities in order that change efforts are fully understood by all participants.

Leadership

In a 1963 study, Chesler, Schmuck, and Lippitt found that the staff's perception of the principal's support for innovation correlated .65 ($p < .05$) with the amount of staff inventiveness. Consistent with that study, the findings for leadership of this

investigation indicated that administrators who encouraged integration and supported the staff in the implementation of the practice were found in integrated schools. Moreover, the reciprocity arrangement in place in the two integrated schools lends support to the findings of Fox and Lippitt (1964) and Lippitt (1967) who found that colleague encouragement and support played a vital role in the promotion of innovation.

Regarding reward systems, this investigation found that extrinsic rewards for teachers did not play a role in the implementation of integration. Rather, rewards were intrinsic in nature, as reported by staff members at the integrated schools and often were reported as coming in the form of colleague support and encouragement. These findings are consistent with those of Fox and Lippitt (1964) but inconsistent with those of Stephens (1974) and Gross, Giacquinta, and Bernstein (1970) who found that the leader who actively dispensed rewards (e.g., praised, verbally motivated) had more innovative staffs. Across both integrated schools, while the staffs reported that they felt their administrators encouraged and supported their efforts, they did not note that they felt rewarded by the administrators.

Finally, concurring with findings of Lippitt (1967) and Radcliffe (1967), this study found that teachers who expressed feelings of freedom relative to conducting instruction in their own chosen way were more inclined toward innovation. Such feelings were reported by teachers at the two integrated schools.

This investigation of integration as change supports the notion that organizational leaders can play a major role in facilitating or impeding change within their organization. The school administrator, as the ultimate authority, was found in this study to hold one of the keys to the self-contained special class door. He could precipitate integration or maintain segregation, motivate the staff toward change or encourage them to continue with tradition. The implication of these findings for special education indicates that where the concept of normalization for exceptional children is accepted as a viable alternative to segregation of pupils with special needs, building administrators supportive of this concept may be actively sought. Additionally, inservicing of current administrators and, through natural attrition, hiring of new administrators supportive of the concept, may be steps which school districts should consider.

Decision Making

In relation to this variable, participation by teachers in the decision making process that occurs in innovative endeavors was discovered to be essential by Johansen (1967), McMillan (1975), Reynolds (1975), and Silberman (1970). Among Johansen's (1967) findings he also noted that when the hierarchial type of authority was influential in the decision making process, teachers' likelihood of implementation decreased. These findings are concurrent with this study which found integration occurring in two schools in which teachers themselves were the managers of and decision makers in the practice and where the administrators acted in a consultative capacity.

A statement by Brickell (1964, p.503) regarding the semantics involved in discussing decision making - "shared decision making", "the team approach", "full staff involvement" - when, in truth, the path embarked upon has at least been partly preselected by the administrator, is an interesting and timely observation. It sheds light upon the allowance and ability of the staffs at the integrated schools to manage integration practices. The findings of this research effort agree with Brickell's idea that preconceived decisions by the administrators at schools A and B may have led to the teachers becoming the primary institutors of the integration program. The reciprocity arrangement devised by the teachers might not have been accomplished without some unilateral though undiscussed prior decision making on the part of the administrators at each integrated school.

The implications for decision making are related to the concept of participative decision making. It is suggested that organizational members may indeed effect change, on a practical level, if they perceive themselves as having the authority to do so. Administrators who are willing to act in a consultative mode in support of change efforts may reap the benefits of the innovation without tying themselves down in total involvement. Participants in change can work cooperatively to effect mutually beneficial results for themselves as well as children without threatening the autonomy of administrators.

Human Resource Utilization

In his 1967 study of innovation Lippitt found that teachers who perceived a greater number of resources (i.e., principal, colleagues, and others) available to them for help in the process of innovating were more effective in seeking help and sharing their own resources. This was found to be true at the two integrated schools. Those participating in integration practices chose to do so and also chose to share their resources in the form of skills and talents. The teachers who reciprocally shared pupils sought help from one another committing themselves to the total program that accompanied the practices. The findings suggest that the effective utilization of human resources in terms of change efforts among participants in the change may be an important determinant of the effectiveness of the change.

Attitudes

Concurring with findings by Eichholz (1963), Fullan (1972), Grosenick (1970), and Willower (1963) this study revealed a relationship between teachers' attitudes toward change and their feelings about their own preparation, competencies, adequacies, understandings, and skills in relation to the change. Many regular class teachers reported that they did not feel adequately prepared to deal with integration of ED/NI students in their classrooms. The effect of these feelings on their attitudes, however, is not clear as at the integrated schools teachers reported having positive attitudes toward both ED/NI students and integration while at the non-integrated schools the teachers' attitudes toward ED/NI students

were positive but they expressed negativism toward integration of these students. The administrators at the integrated schools expressed positive attitudes toward both ED/NI students and integration while at the non-integrated schools administrators' attitudes toward both ED/NI students and integration were negative. It is suggested that at the non-integrated schools the administrators' attitudes toward ED/NI students may have been a result of their disciplinary interactions with the pupils which the regular class teachers would not have experienced, hence the difference in attitudes among the two groups toward the students. It is also suggested, however, that the administrators' attitudes toward integration may have had some influence on the teachers' attitudes toward integration.

The implications of these findings intimate that positive attitudes toward change, integration, facilitates its occurrence and attitudes of teachers toward change may be reflective of their superiors' attitudes. Resistance to change may remain a barrier to creating and implementing innovative ideas. Overcoming this resistance at the level of the individual, could be accomplished through the use of a normative - re-educative strategy (cf. Chin and Benne, 1969) involving intensive inservicing of present teachers and administrators and preparing future educators, at the college level, by exposing them to coursework and field experience related to special education.

Output

Morale

Lippitt (1967) noted that teachers who felt they had power which

they could use to direct their own classroom life, that they could manage their classrooms effectively, and who were confident about themselves were more innovative and more willing to share their classrom activities and information about these activities with their peers with minimum fear of failure or rejection. Morale was reported to be high at both the integrated and non-integrated schools (although the indicators of morale which the researcher utilized during observation did not suggest high morale at the non-integrated schools) and yet only schools A and B integrated students. Morale, ultimately, remained a very elusive and complex variable, one which did not differentiate integrated schools from non-integrated schools, and one which deserves much closer attention by researchers to determine its relevance to change.

Cohesiveness

Among the findings relative to cohesiveness was the general reporting by teachers at the integrated schools that they identified with the total school rather than with a particular group of the school. This was in opposition to the information supplied by teachers at the non-integrated schools where teachers reported that they felt alienated from the total school and identified themselves with particular subgroups within the school. In relation to this finding Lippitt (1967) found that teachers who felt alienated from the social system of the school were less likely to share innovative ideas and information with their colleagues. An implication may be drawn that identification of members with the total organization may

lend itself more toward change, integration, than polarization of members into distinct subgroups with which they identify. Like morale, however, cohesiveness remains a complex variable and additional research is indicated to determine its relationship to change efforts.

Relative to the nine organizational variables studied in this investigation and within the conceptual model of systems analysis, a general implication appears to be that variables at the thruput level have the greatest relationship to integration as change and that variables which interface with the environment at the input and output levels have the weakest relationship. This may suggest that schools are, indeed, more closed than open systems and that the interface between educational organizations and the environment is, in the final analysis, limited. Additional research to gain insight into all of the implications of this study, including research involving other exceptionalities, is suggested and encouraged in order that a better understanding of the dynamics of educational organizations and change may ensue. From such understanding and increased knolwedge will hopefully come the ability to make more accurate predictions of events: a means of determining those schools in which special classes may be housed with portent of highly successful integration; and, a point of entry for social intervention in non-integrated educational organizations. Only then may one of the major challenges of Public Law 94-142 be achieved: the provision of a free, appropriate, public education for all children in the least restrictive environment.

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